

A-191

~~SECRET~~

Air Touch

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO : Embassy RIO DE JANEIRO

(26)
POL 29
This document consists of
5 pages Number 9
of 9 copies Series A

AmConCan RECEIVED

June 16, 1964

American Citizens Detained For Subversive Activities
Later Released
Confidential 332 and 333

On the evening of June 9, approximately at 5:30 PM in the evening, two American citizens, Joseph E. Page (U.S. Passport No. 5312151), a free-lance journalist from Bedford, Massachusetts, and Bernardino John PIRO, (U.S. Passport No. 0599329), from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is serving in Natal, RN as a Papal Volunteer, were taken into custody by the Pernambuco authorities on suspicion of participating in subversive activities. Prior to their arrest, the two men had never met one another, and it was a strange set of circumstances which led them to become rapidly acquainted. The following morning, at the intervention of the Consulate General, the pair was released after passing a gruesome night in a Recife jail.

Background:

During April, 1961, Joseph Page and his colleague Ralph SACKER passed through Recife for several weeks during a trip through Brazil to write articles on a free-lance basis. While in Recife, they made many contacts among the American and Brazilian officials as well as other important Brazilians in the Northeast. Among their contacts numbered Francisco JULIÃO the famed Liga Camponesa leader. The journalists met Julião through one of his agents, Antonio LUCENA, a PCB member and currently in a Recife prison, who acted as interpreter during most of their association with the Liga leader. Page and Sacker soon became friendly with Julião and appeared at various comícios (meetings) with him. On two occasions they rode with him to Communist rallies, once to the interior town of Goiana and once to the Recife suburban town of Prazeres. Sacker made a special

Enclosure: Copy of Note to Secretary of Public Safety

~~SECRET~~

PJG:Vea:jrs

This document consists of

5 pages Number 9

of 9 copies. Series A

effort of appearing to agree with Julião's political views in an effort to gain Julião's confidence and learn more about the man. At one point, Julião complimented Nader by stating that the American understood him better than did Fidel CASTRO. The journalists were partially successful in their mission, and later had their articles published by The Atlantic Monthly (April, 1964 issue) and the Christian Science Monitor (issues in early September, 1963) and possibly other Boston, Massachusetts newspapers.

This year, Joseph Page decided to return to Recife to attempt some post-Revolutionary articles on the Northeast during the free months of summer open to him before going to study for a Doctorate in Law. He arrived in Recife in May and began to search out his old contacts, including Antonio Lucena. Page telephoned Lucena's home (the wire was tapped by the local authorities), went to Lucena's former office, and finally tried to see Lucena in prison. On all three occasions, Page was unsuccessful, but his persistence alerted the suspicions of the authorities who placed him under surveillance. At the same time, Lucena, in jail, when he learned of Page's efforts to contact him began to tell the authorities that Page and Nader were experienced agitators and had worked closely with Julião in organizing rural groups for demonstrations. It is not clear just what Lucena's motives are, but it set the authorities into action.

On June 9, during Page's absence, it appears that the authorities searched his hotel room and came upon his notes, including notes from interviews conducted last year. While the searchers did not read English, they recognized the names of many Brazilian Communists and found among Page's effects books written by Celso FURTADO, books on Cuba and Athayde da SILVA's Rebellion in the Backlands, all considered as possibly subversive. The authorities left the room and awaited Page's return.

The Arrest:

At approximately 3:30 PM on June 9, the Consulate General was alerted by a contact that Page was under surveillance by the local authorities. However, the contact stated that there was little danger of Page being apprehended. The ConsGen immediately notified Page to come to the ConsGen and informed him of the situation upon his arrival. Page and a ConsGen officer then went to the Secretaria de Segurança Pública (Secretariat of Public Safety) to explain Page's presence in Recife and to answer any questions which the authorities might desire to ask. When the ConsGen officer requested to see the Assistant Delegato, Alvaro de COSTA LIMA (in charge

of Communist activities in Pernambuco) and explain the nature of the visit to the Secretaria, he was told that Costa Lima could not see the Americans that afternoon and for them to return the following morning. The Officer then dropped Page by his hotel (Hotel Guaranapes) and told Page to contact the Consul if any difficulty should arise.

Page went to his room, undressed, and prepared to take a nap. He was soon disturbed by a knock. Upon answering the door, Page was confronted by an inspector (who turned out to be Alvaro Costa Lima), two policemen and a hotel employee. After searching the room briefly and demanding to be directed to Ralph Nader, the inspector seized most of Page's documents and told Page he would have to go to the Secretaria for further questioning. Page, not realizing the seriousness of the situation, readily agreed to accompany the investigator, and the group departed.

Just as they reached the elevator of the hotel, Bernardino Fieno stepped out of the open door in search of Page. Fieno had been given Page's name by a mutual friend, Alan BLANK, who is a helicopter pilot employed in Brazil, and had been told to contact the journalist for a social drink. Fieno had passed by the hotel earlier, but not finding Page there had returned at this fateful moment. Recognizing an American, Fieno asked Page if he were Joe Page, and the latter responded affirmatively. The local authorities taking Fieno to be Ralph Nader, asked him for his identification, but since Fieno's passport was in his hotel room (Hotel Nassau), they apprehended him, despite his protests, and took him to the Secretaria along with Page. Page and Fieno continually were denied the right to contact the American Consulate General, both at the hotel or later at the Secretaria, although they asked for this right several times.

At the Secretaria, the two Americans were held in a small room for several hours (from about 6:00 PM to about 9:30 PM) until Fieno was taken into another room for interrogation by Costa Lima. Apparently, the authorities were satisfied with Fieno's story, for he was questioned briefly and then permitted to rest in the confinement room. Page was then summoned and questioned intensively. He was accused of being a Communist, of having been active in subversive activities and of knowing Nader's whereabouts in Brazil. After denying the charges and informing the interrogators that to the best of his knowledge Nader was in Boston, Page lost his temper. He was then placed in "the hole" (his words), a small, hot, putrid cell with three other inmates. After several hours, Page was taken back to the interrogation room and began to answer the questions once more. This time Page controlled himself and the authorities seemed to believe his story, for after taking down the testimony and obtaining Page's signature, they permitted him to join Fieno in the confinement room.

A-191

This document consists of
4 5 pages Number 9

EO50x1

~~SECRET~~

A-191
Asconsul BRUIPE

- 5 -

In a note addressed to the Chief of the Civil Household, the Consulate General has protested the detention of two presumptively innocent citizens and prohibiting them from the right to communicate with the Consulate General.

Edward J. Howell
Minister Consul General

~~SECRET~~

Consulado Geral Americano
Recife, 16 de junho
de 1964.

Excelentíssimo Senhor:

Em nome do Governo dos Estados Unidos da América, depejo expressar-lhe minha mais profunda preocupação, acerca da detenção de dois cidadãos americanos, senhores Joseph A. Page e Bernardino J. Fieno, ocorrida terça-feira, 9 de junho de 1964, no Recife.

Ditos cidadãos americanos foram mantidos na Secretaria da Segurança Pública incommunicáveis e impedidos de se comunicarem com este Consulado Geral, não obstante suas múltiplas solicitações nesse sentido, de acordo com os regulamentos deste Consulado Geral.

Embora compreenda que certas medidas de precaução devam ser adotadas pelas autoridades constituídas, em situação difícil como é a atual, devo, entretanto, confessar-lhe ser meu dever interessar-me por cidadãos americanos que recorrem a este Consulado Geral, quando se julgam tolhidos no exercício dos seus direitos.

Aguardando sua valiosa cooperação com referência ao assunto, aproveito a oportunidade para reiterar meus protestos da mais alta estima e consideração.

Atenciosamente,

15/6/64

Edward J. Rowell

Ministro Consul-Geral
dos EE. UU. de America

Excelentíssimo Sr. Edson Régis,
Chefe da Casa Civil,
Palácio do Governo,
Nesta.

PdeVos:OMiranda:hlr

Hand
delivered
6/16/64